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WYANDOT TALES, INCLUDING FOREIGN ELEMENTS.¹

BY C. M. BARBEAU.

I. HE IS GOING TO THE LAND OF BLISS.²

As she was about to start off, the old woman called Tawidi'a, and said, "Tawidi'a, you must now look after the child while he is asleep. Drive the mosquitoes away lest they bite him, mind you!" And she went away.

After having been fooling around and playing at some distance, Tawidi'a suddenly remembered that his mother had said, "Mind you, don't let the mosquitoes bite the child!" (So he went over and looked.)³

There, right on the child's face, a mosquito was standing and biting him. Tawidi'a at once got hold of a stone maul and hit the mosquito with it. He wanted simply to kill the mosquito; but it so happened that, as he had hit the child's head with the maul, he had only destroyed the child.⁴

Indeed, he was so scared that he concealed himself where the swans hatch. As he sat there, he killed the swans as well. When it was done, he gathered the feathers; and, having covered his body with gum, he coated it with the feathers, that stuck fast all over him. He had in his mind, "She must not recognize me!"

When the old woman came back home, she soon found out that the child had been murdered. She called out, "Tawidi'a!" . . . But he only quacked, as the swans do. His voice was really like that of the swans. Again she cried out, "Tawidi'a!" Once more he quacked, and his voice was still exactly like that of the swans.

His mother, however, came over to the place where the swans used to hatch. There she found Tawidi'a. She said, "Why did you ever kill the child?" He replied, "But you told me, 'Don't let the mosquitoes bite the child!' and there I saw a mosquito sitting in the

¹ Published by permission of the Geological Survey, Ottawa, Can.

² This is a modern series of episodes added to an old and popular winter tale, which is well known among the Wyandots and the Senecas. Tawidi'a is the hero in both tales, with the difference that in the archaic one he is always most awkward and ridiculous, while in the modern counterpart he shows himself most clever in all the episodes but the first one. The above version was recorded in text among the Wyandots of Oklahoma, in 1912 (informant, Catherine Johnson; interpreter, Allen Johnson). The story-teller first used to announce the title of the tale that he was about to recite. The audience would acknowledge by the exclamation "Yihe'!" (that is, "Welcome!")

³ The words and sentences in parentheses are not explicitly included in the text.

⁴ This incident reminds one of La Fontaine's fable, "L'ours et l'amateur des jardins."

child's face and biting him; so I hit the mosquito (with the maul), for I wanted to kill it, and not the child." The old woman cried out, "Away with you! Be off to some other place, for I don't want to see you any longer!"

Tawidi'a ran off a long distance into the woods. His mind was now deeply troubled. He came back at night to the place where his mother was living, and killed an ox¹ that belonged to him. As he skinned it, he left the horns and tail attached to the skin. When this was done, he wrapped himself up in the ox's rawhide and went off some distance. Then he climbed a tree and sat way up. As the green around the tree was very nice and smooth, it so happened that at night several men came riding on horseback to that very place. They did not see Tawidi'a standing almost in the tree-top, and one of them came to sit on a large log lying just near by. Then he pulled out a great deal of the yellow metal, the gold money that the others took a long time to count. Some more money was soon brought forth (and counted).² One of them said, "What would you do if the Underground-Dweller³ (the Devil) should come here in person?" The other replied, "I would surely kill him!" and added, "And you, what would you do?" The first one said, "It is doubtful. I really don't know what I should do if I were to see the Underground-Dweller here."

At that very moment the branch on which Tawidi'a was sitting broke off, and down to the ground he fell with his horned (and tailed) garment. The other fellows jumped upon their feet and ran away, leaving behind heaps of yellow metal.

Now, Tawidi'a, having removed the ox's hide that covered his body, gathered a great deal of money and started for his mother's home. He said, "Be in a hurry and help me! I have discovered no end of metal, and we must gather it up."

This made her forget altogether that she had banished him; and she was, as before, willing to keep him with her. They had, in fact, found a great deal of gold, which they stored away.

Now, then, their closest neighbor was a man of wealth and standing. So the old woman said, "Go over there and borrow the small, barrel-like vessel⁴ in which he is said to measure his goods, for I want to know how much we have got now." Before he started to borrow the bushel, she added, "You must not say that we want it for measuring the yellow metal, mind you!"

¹ Kyutô'skwèrô', a term that applies to both ox and cow. It means "cattle" as well.

² This detail reminds one of Ali Baba and the forty thieves, in the Arabian Nights.

³ The Wyandots' modern notions about the Devil, or, as they call him, the Underground Dweller, have been borrowed from the Europeans.

⁴ The measure that the Wyandots used to call "half a barrel" is now termed "half a bushel."

When they had counted many bushels of gold, Tawidi'a returned the small barrel to its owner. He intentionally managed, however, to fill a crack in the bushel with gold coins, so that the man of importance might know that gold had been measured. The owner of the bushel said, "You seem to have been measuring gold!" — "It is so!" boasted Tawidi'a. The other inquired, "But how could it ever be so, for you are quite poor?" Tawidi'a replied, "But I am a thief, you know!" The wealthy man exclaimed, "Quite untrue! for I do not believe that you could ever steal anything that belongs to me." And he added, "I would believe you only if you could unyoke the (pair of) oxen with which my servant is now ploughing my field yonder."

The field was by this time almost all ploughed up. So Tawidi'a hastened, and watched very closely. Quite soon he began to chase some young quails ahead of him; and he spoke to them, saying, "Listen! you come down here and run over there, past the fence. When the ploughman chases you, let him believe that he is just on the point of catching you!" So it all happened, and the ploughman was (for a long while) running after (the quails).

Meanwhile Tawidi'a unyoked an ox, cut off its tail and one of its horns, and he stuck the horn into the other ox's back and forced the tail into its mouth. Then he drove the unyoked ox to the butcher's shop and sold it for meat.

When the ploughman came back to his field, he could not anywhere find the other ox; and, seeing one of its horns sticking out of the other's back, he came and told his master, "It is impossible for me to plough any longer. One of the oxen, indeed, has swallowed the other!" As the man of rank wanted to see for himself, he also realized that one of the oxen had swallowed the other. He said, however, "Wait a while! I must go to the butcher's shop and see."

(He came in as) Tawidi'a was still there. (Boasting of) his deed, Tawidi'a insisted, "Oh, let us see! Did you not fail to believe me when I said that I was able to steal? Did you not say, 'You could not truly steal anything from me'?" The other man retorted, "You would have to achieve far more before I could believe you. This time, I say, you are not able to steal my gold finger-ring, which I have just handed to my wife."

Tawidi'a went over at night to the wealthy man's house, and close by his door he set up a large manikin looking exactly like himself, and began to watch. By and by he yelled, "Kwe'!"¹ and the man of distinction got up, shouldered his gun, went out, and, seeing Tawidi'a standing by, he shot at him. The manikin fell to the ground (for only the manikin had been shot). The man of importance called his servants at once, saying, "Cover his body up with dirt!"

¹ Meaning "Halloo!" "How do you do?" This is still the most common form of greeting among the Wyandots, besides "Bajou!" the distorted French word "bonjour!"

Meanwhile the real Tawidi'a rushed into the house and said to the woman (with the ring), "Hurry up and give me my ring, for it has now been done: I have killed Tawidi'a!" (and she gave Tawidi'a the ring.)

The man of rank came in some time later, and, speaking to his wife, he said, "Now give me my ring, for I have indeed done it: I have killed Tawidi'a." She replied, "But I had already done so when you came in and ordered, 'Give me my ring at once!'"

The truth then dawned upon him, and he murmured, "How truly daring and clever that fellow is!"

Tawidi'a still had the ring on, when, the next day, he met the other man, who said, "Now there can be no doubt that I shall do away with him once for all!" And his servants caught Tawidi'a and fastened him in a bag. His next command was, "Carry him to the lake yonder, and, fastened inside the bag as he is, drop him into the lake!"

The load was at once placed upon a wagon and taken away toward the lake. Then Tawidi'a began to say, "I am now going to the land of bliss."

As the servants were passing with the wagon by a berry-patch, they started to pick fruit, and farther and farther they went. Just about then some one came along the road driving a large herd of cattle. Tawidi'a, from within the bag that was still on the wagon, kept on repeating, "I am now going to the land of bliss." The man who was driving the cattle along the road overheard these words, "I am now going to the land of bliss;" so he inquired, "Could you not take me along with you?"—"By all means!" replied Tawidi'a; "but untie the fastening of the bag!" He then put the other fellow in the bag in his stead; and he himself, Tawidi'a, went away, driving the cattle along the road.

When the servants returned from the berry-patch, they made for the lake with the bag, that was still at the same place on the wagon. They put the bag into a canoe when they reached the lake, and soon they dropped it in the middle of the water. When it was done, they came back to their master's house and reported, "It was done a long while ago; he was dropped into the lake."

Very soon, however, Tawidi'a was seen riding about. He, in fact, came to see the important man, and he conversed with him. The other said, "Is it really you that I see here?" Tawidi'a replied, "Yes, it is I!"—"But how did you ever manage to get out of the lake?" inquired the first one. Tawidi'a explained, "There is hardly any water there. When the servants dropped the bag into the water, it hit the bottom very gently and lay there. Some people that were standing around there untied the bag in which I was sitting (and let me out). Then they took me along into a wonderful country (the land of bliss) with vast prairies and immense herds of cattle. After

a time I got tired of all that, and said, 'Now I must be going back home!' so these people said, 'Very well! but you had better take back to your home as many of these domestic animals as you possibly can drive along, and you should ride this fine horse.' So it truly happened, and on my way back I drove along as large a herd of cattle as ever I wanted."

The man of distinction said, "(This is so wonderful) that I myself want to be taken to the lake in a bag and be dropped into the water;" and as it was being done, he added, "Take me along farther out on the lake and drop the bag, for it may be that the land of bliss is still more wonderful there."

All along the road, moreover, the rich man was repeating the same words as Tawidi'a, "I am now on the way to the land of bliss." When his servants had reached the middle of the lake, he said, "Here it is!" and the bag was dropped into the deep water, never to emerge again, to be sure.

In vain did they expect the man of distinction to return, as Tawidi'a had done, for he had sought his own destruction; and because he had said to Tawidi'a, "I do not believe you could ever steal anything," he had learned once for all that, indeed, Tawidi'a was not only able to steal, but was most clever and shrewd.

There the wealthy man's wife is still waiting for him, remembering that he had said (before leaving), "I will return very soon after they have dropped me into the lake;" but maybe she will have to wait forever.

Yihé!

2. THE STEER AND THE ILL-TREATED STEP-SON.¹

A child was much abused (by his step-mother), who would not give him any food, hoping that he might thus die of starvation.

The cattle were under his care, and he had to drive the milking-cows (back to the settlement) at night. Although food was for a long time refused to him by his step-mother, he would come back home every night; and it was truly strange (to see) how he could thus live without being fed. The woman appointed some one to follow the child and watch him wherever he went.

At mid-day, when the boy had gone quite a long way off, he stopped and sat down. Then two men, it seems, came out of the head of a Steer, and gave some food to the child. The spy reported to the woman what he had seen; and she replied, "So it is! If the boy is now alive, it is because he is fed by the Steer which he owns."

The old woman soon managed to get sick, and (her husband) hired

¹ Recorded in text form at Wyandotte, Oklahoma, in July, 1912 (informant, Catherine Johnson; interpreter, Allen Johnson). This tale, according to Mrs. Johnson, was one that the late Mc³da-dí'fíq't often used to relate.

many medicine-men to doctor her. Her health, however, could not possibly be restored. Now, then, she pretended that while asleep she had received instructions in a dream. She said, "I must give a feast, this is the only means for me to recover; and the Steer owned by the boy must be slaughtered (for the occasion)." The father therefore gave advice to his son, saying, "Would you not spare (the Steer), and (allow) him to be killed? I shall give you a similar one, if you are willing to give him up." By no means! The boy would not spare his own domestic animal; for (there was no doubt that) his step-mother's hatred for him was the only reason why she wanted to do away with the helpful animal.

The child wept, and the Steer came along. "Don't cry!" said he, "for you must consent, and say, 'I shall be willing only if she herself kills the Steer which I own.'" And (the woman) replied, "Yes, I am able to kill (the animal), provided you tie him."

Then the boy proceeded towards a big stump, and he stood on it. The Steer, in fact, had advised him to do so, adding, "We must take to flight; and when I pass by (the stump), I shall put you on my back."

No sooner had the people bound the Steer than (the woman) came up with a sharp knife with which to kill him. But the Steer ran his horns through (her body), thus destroying her instead; and, breaking his bonds to shreds, he escaped and went to the place where the boy was standing on the stump. As the Steer passed by, the child mounted upon his back.

They took their flight to a remote place; and when they came to a large river, the Steer simply swam across it. They had no longer anything to fear; for nobody would now slay the domestic animal, who, in his usual manner, fed the child every day.

After some time they again travelled together, and found another river, which the Steer crossed with the boy sitting on his back. The Ox said the next day, "So it is! we are now to encounter bad luck. Starvation is walking this way, and we shall have to fight her (this) afternoon. After that, I may (be able to) feed you but once more, at noon. For fear, however, that I may be overpowered, I will now tell you what is to be done after our fight with Starvation. While my body is still warm, you must skin me (and remove) a narrow strip of my hide all along the spine, from the nose to the tail, which you must leave attached. That is what you have to do."

Noon was no sooner past than the Steer entered in a great fury, and began to walk back and forth. The boy climbed a tree near by, and watched the struggle that was going on, although he could not see at all (the being) against whom his domestic animal was fighting.

The Steer was defeated in the end and destroyed by Starvation.

The child then remembered what he had been advised to do. So he skinned the animal, and, when it was done, he went away. He did not really know whither he was going. That is why the (being) whose hide (he had kept as a charm) conversed with him several times, indicating the way.

The boy did not stop until he had reached a place where people were living; and, at the first house he came across, an old woman abiding thereat inquired, "Where do you come from?" He replied, "I wish to stay here and work." — "What are you able to do?" asked she; and he said, "I look after the cattle: this is what I can do." And she said, "You are the very sort of servant I have long been looking for."

The boy therefore staid (with her); and the old woman became "his mother." As he had now to pasture her domestic animals, she gave him a warning. "You must not take my cattle yonder," said she, "for (my land) extends only that far; and you should not go beyond, for my wicked neighbor who lives there is armed with a spear."

The cattle had soon grazed all the grass on the old woman's land, so the boy led them (into the fields) beyond. Again the next day he trespassed on the land of the dreaded neighbor, who then noticed it. "Away with you!" said he. "This is my land, and I do not want you to bring your cattle here." The boy replied, "It could not be so, for all the grass over there has been grazed." He added, "I have now chosen to fight with you." The neighbor retorted, "Very well! To-morrow at noon we shall fight together."

The boy wore his strip of hide as a belt when they both met at noon on the next day. Unfastening it from around his body, he at once slashed the other fellow's legs off with it. Now the neighbor lamented, and said, "Oh, do not kill me! Have mercy, and I shall give you all my land!"

The boy, in fact, spared him, and accepted his offer. When her (adopted) son came back home with her cattle, the old woman asked him, "Is it really so? Have you not pastured the cattle on our wicked neighbor's land, although I had urged you not to do so?" The young fellow answered, "It is so, indeed, and we have fought (over it); but I have compelled him to abandon all his land." And from that time on he allowed the cattle to roam about free.

When the autumn came, the old woman said, "Be off, and sell (one of) our domestic animals! You should not bargain with (the trader) who lives in the village near by, for he is always quite unfair (to the country folks ¹). Try the other one who lives far from the village, instead, as he may give you a larger price. With this sum we shall purchase warm clothes for the winter."

¹ Added by Allen Johnson, the interpreter.

Now, then, the boy started for the village with the domestic animal; and, as he had barely covered half of the distance, he met some one who asked, "Where are you taking it to?" He replied, "I am going to sell it, so that we may get warm clothes for the winter."—"Let us barter together!" said the other. The boy inquired, "What will you give me?" And the (stranger spoke to his dog), saying, "O my domestic! here you must defecate." Then he pulled out a box containing (two) "tumbling-bugs,"¹ and laid the round insects (on the ground). They at once began to roll the (dog's) fæces. The man next put down (several) mice² and drew out a musical bow (or violin).³ No sooner had he rubbed the strings than the mice danced.

Now the boy was willing to barter his ox (with the stranger); and when it was done, he came back to his adopted mother's home. She inquired, "Have you really sold it?" He said, "Yes!"—"What did you get in exchange?" asked she. And he replied, "Here it is, the dog, for one thing;" and (speaking to the dog) he said, "O my domestic! defecate here!" Upon being laid down, the beetles began to tumble the fæces about. The boy next put the mice on the ground and began to rub the stringed bow. The mice, in truth, danced; and the old woman exclaimed, "Wu '! This is real fun, and I am much amused." The next morning she said, "You shall once again go there; and this time you must not fail in trading this ox, so that we may get warm clothes for the winter." So the boy again started off with an ox, which he was going to sell. There at a distance he saw the same fellow coming along. When they met, the other asked, "Where are you going with the ox?"—"This one," replied the boy, "I am going to trade in order to get warm clothes for next winter."—"Here I am! Let us barter together!" was the answer. "What will you give me?" asked the boy. "This is the very thing (for you)," said the man, thereupon pulling out a veil, a very small thing, indeed. The young fellow inquired, "But what is it good for?" The other explained, "Look here! You see the large tree standing there?" And he pitched the veil at the tree. It was done at once: (the tree) had been reduced into chopped wood, arranged into several piles.

The boy gave his consent, and exchanged the ox (for the veil). And the stranger added, "Over there lives a wealthy man who may be

¹ The "tumbling-bugs," as they are popularly known, are "dung-beetles" (family, *Scarabidæ*). Allen Johnson, the interpreter, stated that these insects—generally seen in pairs—lay their eggs in the fæces of animals, which they are often seen rolling about to a suitable place for their purpose: hence the name of "tumbling-bugs."

² Dëtsù'ũgyăťé'ă: "the-her-finger(ring)-has on," which is the descriptive name applied to the mouse.

³ Yăřê'săyă'ăta': name of a musical instrument consisting of a bow and string (or strings?) [yăřê'sa', "string of a bow;" ŭyă'ăti', "it rubs" or "it is rubbed" (in Wyandot)]. The same name is now given to the violin (informant Allen Johnson).

useful to you, for he always employs a wood-cutter; go there, and he will surely hire you, and you will thus get a great deal with which to purchase your winter clothes."

The young man went back home; and the old woman asked him, "Have you sold it?" He replied, "Yes!" — "What did he give you?" was her next question. And, as he said "Here it is, a veil," she laughed, and exclaimed, "This thing must indeed be warm (for the winter), — a veil!" but he explained, "With this thing I shall indeed realize great benefits." Thereupon he went to the place where stood a number of large trees, pitched the veil, and many cords of chopped wood replaced them. So he said, "Certainly! (by means of) this our bodies shall keep warm."

The next morning he started for the rich man's place, and stood at the door (for a while). The people (in the house) saw him, and reported, "A hireling is standing there." The chief came around and asked, "What is it for?" The (young man) replied, "I am looking for work." The important personage inquired, "What can you do?" — "This I can do, cut wood;" and (the man) said, "You are the very one I was looking for. (You see) that island yonder? It is a big island, and you must chop all the wood (on it)." He added, "At noon you may come back here to eat." And (speaking to another servant) he ordered, "You go there and show him the place where he is to chop wood."

Now they took him along to the large island, and said, "This is (the place)." As they were still there, walking about, the boy made a request. "Pray," said he, "turn around and be off! for it is truly impossible for me to do any work when some one is looking at me." So they went away.

Now, then, he began and pitched the veil at the trees that stood there in great numbers. Long before noon, in truth, the work was done; and all (the wood was arranged) in very many cords. After a while, growing tired of walking about, he thought, "I had better go back to the house now." When he was again seen by the wealthy man's servants, they repeated, "Here he is!" and their chief came. "Why is it so?" asked he; "you are already walking here, although I had advised you to come in only at noon." The boy retorted, "But it is all done; it is a fact!" His master said, "Mind you! a lie is a grave matter," and he gave a command (to his servants). "Go there!" said he, "and investigate what truth there is in his statement, 'Now I have done it.' " They made their investigation, only to find that it was really so, and that there was nothing but chopped wood there. Their report was, "It is so, he has done it;" upon which the wealthy man said, "Come in! Quite soon I think they will be through with cooking, and after our meal I will pay you." He asked the boy,

moreover, "How did you really do it, for you are not quite grown up as yet?" — "I have chopped (the wood), though," replied the other, "it is quite true;" which he had, of course, done with the help of the veil. When the meal was over, the boy received such a large amount of goods in payment, that he was barely able to carry it to his home. As he reached his mother's house, he exclaimed, "Now, behold! it is your turn to go to the village for the purchase of clothing."

The next morning, in fact, she hired some one to take her to the village, where she bought a large quantity of warm clothes for herself and her son.

Another day the (young man) started for the place where a man of importance resided; and when he arrived there, he was again hired (for chopping down the trees covering) a very large patch of ground. After a while the work was all over; and, as the wood now stood in numerous piles, the price which he received this time still surpassed (what he had received for his first work).

This good fortune, moreover, was all due to the Steer which he used to own.

Again he went back to the place where his mother lived with the large quantity of valuables which he had received in payment. "It is really wonderful," said he, "what benefit we derive from the veil;" and the old woman exclaimed, "Never before have I known such prosperity. Blessed am I for having adopted you!"

It happened once that he made friends with another young man, who informed him, "I have been invited to a feast given by the chief's¹ daughter; and the point is that the fellow who is clever enough to make her laugh (will get married to her), whoever he may be." So they both started for the feast, the young man taking with him the mice, the "tumbling-bugs," and the dog, and wearing his every-day clothes. A large crowd of people were assembled there when the feast began; and (the young men) in turn tried in every possible way to make the chief's daughter laugh, but without avail. When it was over, they said, (pointing to the old woman's son,) "Now be it so! let this one have his turn. He may be able to make her laugh. To be sure, he will not have to exert himself, as he looks most comical with his ragged clothes." The chief said, "By all means! it is now your turn." So the young man answered, "Just a moment! I will bring along the dog, my domestic." (Speaking to his dog) he said, "O my domestic! here you must defecate;" and upon being laid down, the "tumbling-bugs" began to roll the fæces about. Then he put the mice on the ground and rubbed the stringed instrument, and the mice danced. The girl, indeed, could not help laughing. All those who were standing around,

¹ Dekŭrā'kuwa' ("the important or wealthy person") is the term used here and in the preceding cases.

moreover, burst with laughter. The rich man (her father) said, "This one is my son-in-law. Now you must all go back to your homes, for it is so! he has now become my son-in-law." He (spoke to his servants,) saying, "Now dress him up with the very best clothes that can be found." And so they did.

(After a while the young man) felt lonesome and went out. He met an Indian who was walking about. "If you are willing to receive a great deal in payment from me," said (the stranger), "let me first sleep with your wife." The other replied, "It is agreed!" But (the Indian) now hired (a warrior) armed with a spear, and commanded him, "Cast this fellow into the lion's den;" and he dropped the (chief's son-in-law) amongst the fierce brutes, who at once made for him. But the young man simply took his veil and pitched it at the lions, who were all subdued without being killed. He did not remove the veil, and they tried in vain to tear it to pieces. For a number of days, in fact, it was impossible for them to eat when their guardian came to feed them.

Then one of the Lions begged him, "Pray, have pity on us! remove the veil!" — "Not yet," replied the man, "for you were just about to devour me; and if I were to remove it, you would again do the same thing." The Lion said, "No! we shall only help you, and let the people discover that you are (a captive) here." Now the Lion roared, and some one came to see what was the matter. When the people found the man there, they reported the matter to his father-in-law. "He is sitting there amongst the Lions, your son-in-law." The chief said, "Why is it so? Bring him along!" So they did; and he was then able to go to the place where his wife was staying.

The next day he looked for the "spear-man;" and when he found him, he said, "Were you not going to kill me? Look here! it is my turn now!" So he drew the veil out and threw it at the (warrior's) house, just to crush it at once into a heap of small bits. His enemy now being slain, the young man went back to his wife's house. He said, "Now I must be off, for no doubt my mother must be worrying." But the young woman replied, "Not yet! you should not leave until we go there together to bring back your mother with us." So they started together, and arrived at the old woman's house. She was, indeed, far more pleased than ever, for her son had brought back a young woman (his wife) with him. He said, "We have both come to fetch you." — "Very well," replied she; "but I must first sell all that I own." He said, "No! we must look for some one who is as poor as we used to be, and give it all away." They found out, in fact, that their neighbor also had long been a widow, living all by herself. So she gave her all she had.

Then they took their mother along with them, and went to live at

the wealthy man's place. Soon the young man replaced his father-in-law, and became chief in his stead.

It is quite likely that they are still living there now.

Yihé!

3. THE PUMPKIN AND THE RABBIT.¹

A man arrived at the place where (the people) lived. As he was carrying pumpkins, a fellow asked him, "What is this?" He replied, "A mare's² egg." — "What happens when it hatches?" asked the other; and the reply was, "If you only carry the pumpkin every day, it will get heavier, because the colt is now growing (inside it)."

So the other fellow (purchased the pumpkin³ and) carried it along. After a certain time his "mare's egg" grew so heavy that he became entirely exhausted, and he sat down. The pumpkin then rolled down the hill and split open against a projecting stump. But only a rabbit was sitting there, by the stump and the smashed pumpkin. The man who had purchased (the mare's egg) thought to himself, "Now it is really so! it is hatched;" and at once he began to call, "Kupikupikupi!" He was thus coaxing the colt; but it was useless, the (thing) would not listen. So he kept running after it.

After a while he began to inquire from place to place where the people were living. He would ask, "Did you see my horse, that has run away?" Some one begged him, "Pray, tell me! what is it like?" He replied, "(I) cannot tell you, for there was no time to judge of its looks. Indeed, no sooner was it hatched than it ran away. I really don't know what it is like." And the other replied, "It could not be so; because horses don't hatch, but bring forth (their young ones)." So the (simple) man said, "Truly, I have thus been cheated!" and the man added, "Go to the place where it was hatched and look carefully. Let me go with you!" When they had both reached the spot, the man told the owner (of the mare's egg), "Nay, 'egg'⁴ is not its name, but rather 'pumpkin.'⁵ That is it."

Yihé!

¹ Taken down in text form in 1913 (informant, Catherine Johnson; interpreter, Allen Johnson), Wyandotte, Oklahoma. Mrs. Johnson heard this story recited by her uncle, the late Jim Peacock (Dīkyu'kǎyú'ti) of the Wyandot Deer clan. Whenever a storyteller begins a fireside tale which is acknowledged as mere fiction, he first repeats the usual formula, "He walks in the Indian manner" (erǒmé'ha'ce' i'ré', "he-the man | like or thus | both [on both legs]-he-walks;" more broadly, "a man-like is walking"); and the listeners exclaim, "Yihé!" ("Welcome!")

² Yu'cǎ'te', "horse" (male or female).

³ Detail supplied later, in the course of the text.

⁴ Ǫ'tó'ca', "egg."

⁵ Ǫñó'ca, "pumpkin." In the Wyandot winter tales several puns of this kind are to be found.

The foregoing Wyandot story may now be compared to some versions of its European prototype:—

(a) “A somewhat similar story is found in Rivière’s French collection of tales of the Kabail, Algeria, to this effect: The mother of a youth of the Beni-Jennad clan gave him a hundred reals to buy a mule; so he went to market, and on his way met a man carrying a watermelon for sale. ‘How much for the melon?’ he asks. ‘What will you give?’ says the man. ‘I have only got a hundred reals,’ answered the booby; ‘had I more, you should have it.’ — ‘Well,’ rejoined the man, ‘I’ll take them.’ Then the youth took the melon and handed over the money. ‘But tell me,’ says he, ‘will its young one be as green as it is?’ — ‘Doubtless,’ answered the man, ‘it will be green.’ As the booby was going home, he allowed the melon to roll down a slope before him. It burst on its way, when up started a frightened hare. ‘Go to my house, young one!’ he shouted. ‘Surely a green animal has come out of it.’ And when he got home, he inquired of his mother if the young one had arrived.

“In the Gooroo Paramartan (an ‘amusing work, written in the Tamil language by Berchi, an Italian Jesuit, who was missionary in India from 1700 till his death, in 1742’), p. 29, there is a parallel incident to this last. The noodles are desirous of providing their Gooroo with a horse, and a man sells them a pumpkin, telling them it is a mare’s egg, which only requires to be sat upon for a certain time to produce a fine young horse. The Gooroo himself undertakes to hatch the mare’s egg, since his disciples have all other matters to attend to; but as they are carrying it through a jungle, it falls down and splits into pieces; just then a frightened hare runs before them; and they inform the Gooroo that a fine young colt came out of the mare’s egg, with very long ears, and ran off with the speed of the wind. It would have proved a fine horse for their revered Gooroo, they add; but he consoles himself for the loss by reflecting that such an animal would probably have run away with him.”¹

(b) An Irishman had not been long in this country when he was sold a pumpkin by a country fellow, who told him that it was a “mare’s egg.” The Irishman continued his journey, carrying the pumpkin; but he soon got tired, and sat down to rest on the crest of a hill. The pumpkin rolled down the slope and was smashed to pieces. As it hit a brush-heap at the bottom, a rabbit ran away; and the Irishman jumped up, shouting, “Catch him, catch him! He is a race horse!”²

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¹ From *The Book of Noodles*, by W. A. Clouston (London, Elliot Stock, 62 Paternoster Row, 1903, p. 37).

² Informant Mr. F. W. Waugh, of the Geological Survey of Canada, who states that over twenty-five years ago he often heard his father (George N. Waugh, of Brant County, Ontario) recite this story, which was well known in the same locality.